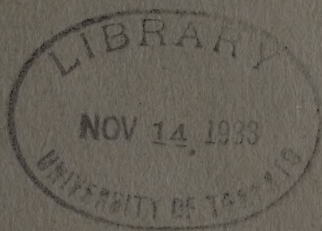




# Moral Transitions in Israel between 1200 and 700 B.C.

BY

PERCIVAL WILSON SPENCE, M.A., B.D.



A THESIS

PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

APRIL, 1913.

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TO THE SENATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO:

GENTLEMEN:

I beg to recommend that the Thesis entitled: "Moral Transitions in Israel between 1200 and 700 B.C.", submitted by Mr. Percival Wilson Spence, M.A., B.D., be accepted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I certify that "it is a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject of which it treats".

(Signed) J. F. McCURDY,  
*Professor of Oriental Languages.*

*April 16th, 1913.*

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I hereby certify that the Thesis above mentioned has been accepted by the Senate of the University of Toronto for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in accordance with the terms of the Statute in that behalf.

(Signed) JAMES BREBNER,  
*Registrar.*

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO,  
*May 30th, 1913.*



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## MORAL TRANSITIONS IN ISRAEL BETWEEN 1200 AND 700 B.C.

### I.

1. It has been well said that the Bible has no commentary like Palestine itself—the “Land of the Book” goes with the “Book of the Land”. From Palestine as it was and as it is to-day the writer would seek to draw some fresh illustrations of the life and thought of the ancient Hebrews and their kindred. The Semitic idea of the solidarity of the deity, the land and the people will be assumed as a fundamental postulate.

2. Israel's contribution to the world was not made in the realm of jurisprudence, politics, art or philosophy, but in the ethical and religious principles which have been taken up, enlarged and readapted in ethics and religion alike. In the evolution of these principles, however, there were of course various forces at work. Forces individual and social, economic and political, commercial and cultural, conspired singly and in combination towards Israel's moral development from Mosaic times to those of the literary prophets. For our inquiry a fair estimate of the relative importance of such forces is called for. The epoch-making expression of permanent ethical truths was the written prophecy of the 8th century. The movements before and simultaneously with the rise of prophetism in Israel should be combined in a living picture before we can appreciate the significance of the great prophets for Israel and the world, and make the phenomenon of prophetism in Israel more reasonable as bound up with the social, political and intellectual forces operating before and after the 8th century. Ethical discussion of modern problems cannot be dissociated from similar or analogous conditions in our own day with all the complexities of our thought and life; much less permissible is such association when we have to do with a primitive, untutored race.

3. While the ethical consciousness of humanity has developed almost everywhere gradually and slowly, abrupt transitions seem to characterize the moral history of Israel and indeed of the Semitic peoples generally. Between Josh. 7: 1, 25, 26*a*, and Hos. 6: 6, or Mic. 6: 6-8, lie four centuries wherein we pass practically from pagan to Christian ethical thought. The rapidity of the spread of Islam was in some respects an analogous phenomenon; but it is in no way comparable to this Hebrew advance in the realm of ethics. Unlike most other



peoples, the Hebrews were confronted with moral problems very early in their history. When, as a horde of nomads, they entered Canaan, they felt that they were being divinely commissioned to dispossess its inhabitants at the edge of the sword. Not very long after they erected a stately temple to the worship of their God, and two centuries later their moral leaders could dissociate Jehovah from the temple. "Seek ye me, and ye shall live; but seek not Bethel nor enter into Gilgal. . . . Seek Jehovah and ye shall live" (Am. 5: 4-6a). Again, ritual without righteousness is said to be worse than useless. Justice should roll down as waters and righteousness as an everflowing stream (Am. 5: 21-24).

4. By adopting the well-established results of historical criticism we shall be able to deal rationally with the Old Testament sources. An ethical conception or the genesis of a political or social movement we may thus place rightly in the line of development. For example, we should know whether to refer the injunction concerning the observance of the Sabbath to the nomadic stage of Israel's history, or to the agricultural stage, whether to the time of Moses or, say, to that of Manasseh. The account of the origin of evil (Gen. 3) is now thought to be late rather than early, as it presupposes a considerable period in ethical development and a discipline under some outstanding moral guidance.

5. While the Old Testament has no formal system of ethics, the prophets had the problem before them daily, and with their eyes we may try to see the situation. The Hebrew was, of course, not an intuitionist, hedonist, utilitarian or idealist. Discussions on free-will and necessity would have been foreign to Amos. To do the divine will was to the prophets the only motive and sanction of moral action. What gave certain men in Israel an overwhelming sense of obligation to choose one course of action and shun another was not that one led to pleasure, another to pain, that one was agreeable while another disagreeable. The Hebrew uncritical answer to the question what enables him to decide between right and wrong was simply that God commands it. He would be in this somewhat like the uncritical intuitionist who would make conscience the infallible guide in conduct. That was to him a necessity in the realm of ethics. It was on this platform that the highest literary prophets stood.

6. Assuming that development in our conception of the good is a reality, we know that the standard of conduct may be affected by causes which are not ethical in origin though they may come to have ethical consequences. On one and the same conception of the good, for example, the same conduct may



be differently judged, merely because its results were once believed to be good and are shown by a later experience to be other than was at first supposed. Though ethical conceptions influence and are influenced by the general condition of knowledge and the idea that man forms of the world in which he lives, we cannot say that intellectual, ethical and religious development are of the same or of kindred origin or motive. Many advances in knowledge may be made without affecting our conceptions of the good in the smallest degree. Many religious notions have no bearing for good or evil upon ethics. These factors of development are not identical though closely correlated, especially those that are ethical and religious.

## II.

7. A correct estimate of the morality of Moses' time shows that the standard of religious and moral life among his people was far from high. It would be an anachronism in human development if a vast horde of nomads like the Hebrews under Moses were possessed of any distinctly moral ideas as to individual rights or social duties. Because the Babylonians in the time of Hammurapi (2200 B.C.) possessed civil and criminal codes marking a very high state of civilization a millennium before Moses, it does not follow that the same should be true of Israel as a people in a later age. The Hebrews at that time, unlike the Babylonians and Egyptians, had no civilization worthy of the name behind them, for they were only in an embryonic stage with the child's conception of justice or truth. We readily grant that even in a rude age there may be men who, through special training, were exceptional in their religious, moral or intellectual outlook. Undoubtedly the unique personality of Moses moulded to a large extent the conceptions of the Hebrews in matters religious, moral and civil.

8. Granting to Moses a leadership in these directions we may still hold that the rank and file of the nomads who came under his influence were far below him in their standard of right and wrong. With all people in the primitive or semi-civilized stage, there is a well recognized principle that the many are directed by the few or by one; especially is this true of the Hebrews throughout their history. Let the individual be captain of the army, sheikh of the tribe, judge at the gate, king on the throne, priest at the altar, he exercised an incalculable influence on the community at large. We speak among ourselves of a social conscience for which no one individual can be held responsible; but it was otherwise in Israel. Our individual

morality or standard of right is no product of the individual by himself, but of society at large into which he is born and brought up. The laws and customs and other institutions of society, and its standards of conduct, are a primary factor in individual morality. The individual apart from society is a pure fiction. Social institutions and customs into which the Hebrews under Moses were born can scarcely be spoken of as shaping any individual conception of morality, as they had then practically developed nothing of the kind.

9. Moses as a moral leader had in the early Hebrews to deal with a people to whom external nature spoke vividly of the supernatural. This is illustrated in the origin of prophecy. "It originated from beliefs or feelings common to men everywhere, such as (1) that there was a supernatural, a God or gods on whose will and power the wellbeing and the destiny of men depended; (2) that these supernatural powers had communion with men and gave them intimations of their will and their purposes; and (3) that these intimations were not given to men indiscriminately, but to certain favored men who communicated them to others. . . . The supernatural powers, it was supposed, gave intimations of their will and disposition towards men in two ways: (1) In an external way, by objective signs or omens in the region of nature as by the flight or cry of birds; (2) in inward revelation given to the mind of man. In this case the deity possessed the man, inspired him, and spoke through him."<sup>1</sup>

10. When trees, springs and stones spoke of the divine to the early Hebrews as they do not to us, they lent their ears readily to the voices of external nature and to the voice of a fellow-mortal claiming to know the divine will. The sooth-sayers and magicians of Egypt, the pythia in Greece, and the sibyl, find partners in the influential band of diviners in Israel (Qosemim). The Urim and Thummim were important for determining the sacred lot in Israel. Possibly the Septuagint of 1 S. 14: 41, 42, suggests the original reading: "And Saul said, If the guilt be in me or in Jonathan my son, give Urim, O Lord God of Israel; but, if thou say it is my people Israel, give Thummim." The ephod, perhaps an image of Jehovah, was in common use in the time of Saul and David, though it afterwards fell into desuetude. Saul mentions as legitimate sources of knowledge of the will of the deity, dreams, Urim and prophets (1 S. 28: 6). The things mentioned in Dt. 18: 10 ff. of the nature of magic or sorcery were always proscribed in the genuine religion of Jehovah (Ex. 22: 18; 1 S. 28: 3, 9).

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<sup>1</sup>Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, art. "Prophecy".



11. Works on Comparative Religion certainly do not place the earliest religion of Israel on a high plane, otherwise an insoluble enigma would present itself. Not only traces of common fetishism "which elevates an arbitrarily chosen object to the rank of its gods, and again, it may be, deposes it", but also the so-called totemism, may be looked for. "Totem stands for some material object—generally an animal—with which a tribe considers itself to have blood relationship, and which, accordingly, in the person of all its representatives is treated by the tribe with the utmost consideration and indulgence, or may actually receive divine worship."<sup>1</sup> Possibly such names as Rachel (רַחֵל=ewe), Leah (wild cow), point to a totemistic basis. According to Kautzsch we have, however, insufficient data to pronounce on this one way or the other. Perhaps "food-taboo" by which the flesh of certain animals is scrupulously avoided as unclean may throw light on the matter. Doubtless the dirty habits of certain animals is a partial explanation of this phenomenon. A further reason may be found in the hypothesis "that each tribe regarded it as strictly forbidden to kill and eat the totem animal with which it believed itself to have blood affinity."<sup>2</sup> The list of unclean animals in Lev. 11: 4 ff. and Dt. 14: 3 ff. cannot possibly be all explained on the ground of a previous totemism. "While it is certainly possible that totemism once prevailed in Israel, its prevalence cannot be proved; and above all we must hold that the religion of Israel as it is represented in the Old Testament has not retained the very slightest recollection of such a state of things."<sup>3</sup>

12. Animism offers us surer ground. "In its pure form it is the belief in the activity of the spirits of recently deceased relatives,"<sup>4</sup> and may include all the members of the tribe or create a still larger realm. Directly connected with animism is ancestor worship, as illustrated in mourning customs, *e.g.*, the cropping of the head and beard; "wounding of the body by bloody incisions intended perhaps to render oneself unrecognizable by the spirit of the dead and thus to escape its malign influence."<sup>5</sup> Some mourning customs were permitted under Jahwism, evidently minus their heathenish associations. The custom of levirate marriage (Dt. 25: 5 ff.) while plausibly pointing to ancestor worship cannot definitely be proved.

<sup>1</sup>Extra volume of Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, "Religion of Israel".

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

Kautzsch grants for the pre-Mosaic period only a tendency towards ancestor-worship. In these tendencies which were only a preliminary step to religion there was a powerful obstacle when a man like Moses sought to develop a firm moral and religious life in his followers. It has been assumed that Moses was gifted with religious genius which qualified him to supply the Jehovah religion with its ethical content, so that no more remained for the prophets than to bring this to full understanding and recognition. Nothing is explained by such an assumption. "The sacred ban, the slaughter of human beings at sacred spots, animal sacrifices at which the entire animal, wholly or half raw, was devoured without leaving a remnant between sunset and sunrise—these phenomena and many others of the same kind harmonize but ill with an inspiring ethical religion."<sup>1</sup>

13. The various sources of the Pentateuch agree in this: (1) that Jehovah was proclaimed by Moses as the God of Israel; (2) that religion as then understood was a covenant between God and his people; and (3) that this covenant was made on the ground of a great deliverance from Egypt. Jehovah definitely chose Israel, and likewise Israel Jehovah. Thus religion is here set on the broad basis of moral choice, and therefore has the promise and potency of moral development.

14. Morality was then only the power of custom. It related itself not to the individual but to the mass. "Morality within the limits of a nomadic tribe is regulated spontaneously by the feeling of blood-kinship without the need of any written word, and is protected by strict patriarchal discipline."<sup>2</sup> But a universal prohibition as in the Decalogue reaching beyond the limits of the tribe, of manslaughter, or theft, to say nothing of other sins, is simply inconceivable to the nomad. Law and morality are two entirely different things. Morality may indeed create law or mould existing law for its own external protection, but the converse is impossible. All attempts to find the germ of the ethical development of the Jehovah religion in the material content of the conception of God as represented by Moses have completely failed.

### III.

15. Israel's entrance into Canaan meant a distinctly new experience and involved momentous changes in their life economically, politically, socially, morally, and religiously. The new generation that entered Palestine made a transition

<sup>1</sup>Budde, *Religion of Israel to Exile*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 33 ff.



from nomadic to agricultural pursuits. The Canaanites, dwelling in most fruitful portions of the land and in strong cities like Taanach, Megiddo and Shechem, became the instructors of the Hebrews chiefly in agriculture,—the basis of civilization generally. The impress of their high culture upon the Hebrews was deep and abiding.

16. Israel's possession of Canaan was gained partly by conquest in which Jehovah as the war-god fought their battles. As yet Jehovah and his people by the covenant at Sinai, where he was long localized, were indissolubly bound together. The ark of the covenant, the visible symbol of Jehovah's presence, went before the Hebrews in their journeyings, but when a more settled condition of life was possible in what they believed to be their own land, Jehovah was gradually localized in Canaan instead of Sinai. The result for the Hebrew mind came to be that a trinity of god, land and people was evolved.

17. It was, however, more by assimilation than by conquest that the Hebrews won Canaan. Thus we see that under the name of Baal-berith a covenant was formed between the Canaanites and the Hebrews of Shechem. Jehovah nominally took the place of the Canaanitic Baal or owner of the soil, but in reality a dangerous syncretism between the simple, austere worship of Jehovah and the more elaborate, sensuous worship of the Baal resulted. The worship of Baal took to itself extreme forms and tolerated licentious practices,—in fact was a nature religion, while Jahwism is rightly regarded as a religion, not of nature, but of higher inspiration. The latter may not be questioned from the religious and ethical standpoint of men like Amos and Hosea; but Jahwism was nevertheless in its earliest form little, if at all, removed from a nature worship when, instead of controlling, it was rather controlled by the Canaanitic cult. The soil tilled by the Canaanites being very fruitful, reverence was paid to the Baal who gave such fertility. The good things of life became the obvious expressions of the divine favor in corn, wine, oil and harvest. To regard the deity as good in himself apart from his gifts was as yet beyond conception. As in outward nature the god gives productivity, so in human nature it is he who causes the increase of the body. The Canaanites in their sensuous disposition emphasized in their worship the importance of the reproductive processes in nature. It was on the rank and file of Israel that Canaanitic culture had its firmest hold almost throughout their history, and the consequent moral deterioration of the body-politic was all but fatal to the ultimate triumph of Jahwism.

18. The morality characteristic of this era of assimilation and conquest (cf. Book of Judges) was in keeping with the heroic or semi-barbarous age. "Courage, endurance, fidelity to clan, family, and companions in arms, must have been often and signally displayed."<sup>1</sup> But such virtues are not distinctly moral virtues in the sense that chastity and veracity are moral virtues. "Ehud (Jg. 3) can be a moral hero only to those who hold that no means are reprehensible which can secure a desirable end. Like his but much more treacherous was the act of Jael." In spite of her deception and violation of the sacred duty of hospitality among all Orientals Jael is blessed above all women who dwell in tents (Jg. 5: 24). No moral censor as yet appears to hurl thunderbolts of judgment at such "heroes". That might is right, or that the end justifies the means is the principle acted on. The virtue of chastity was conspicuous by its absence. Gideon had many wives besides a concubine. Jephthah was the son of a harlot. Samson made harlots his companions. The outrage of the city of Gibeah (Jg. 19: 22) is still more revolting in its grossness.

19. The changed social and political conditions of Israel in Canaan necessitated modifications in their customs and tendencies; above all, perhaps, (a) blood-revenge, and (b) the tendency towards separateness. (a) The principle of blood-revenge has ever been a potent factor among heathen Semites. The original significance of the custom is not now discoverable. In 2 S. 21: 1 ff. it would appear as if the putting of the murderer to death was originally regarded as a sacrifice by which the anger of the tribal god was appeased. The original absence of an ethical view-point is evident from the simple fact that no moral distinction is made between murder and unintentional manslaughter; even in Dt. 4: 41 ff. (a probable addition by "P") and Num. 35: 22 ff. the right of blood-revenge is still ideally recognized, although care is taken to make this right ineffective by providing an asylum for the manslayer in one of the "Cities of Refuge". Jahwism was thus able to give a milder form to this deeply rooted custom though not to abolish it entirely. Moreover, the growing necessity of a stable society put a check on indiscriminate blood-revenge.

20. (b) That the Hebrews as a race did not possess the genius for organization is undeniable. It is only under David that an apparently consolidated Israel was realized. The inherent tendency to unconcerted action was one of the great causes of national schism. A spirit subversive of permanent unity is

<sup>1</sup>McCurdy, History, Prophecy and the Monuments, Vol. III, pp. 93 f.



indicated in the Song of Deborah (Jg. 5). Also in Jg. 8:1 the Ephraimites were offended because they were not asked to fight. The exigencies of war seemed the chief incentive to tribal union. Without a more or less permanent unity of the tribes, it is inconceivable that Israel should have a moral history worthy of record.

21. The above tendency to separateness had religious as well as political issues, especially to the Hebrews after the settlement in Canaan, to whom the deity, the land, and the people were inextricably bound up with one another. The people being divided, their God must also be as it were divided or multiplied, localized here and localized there. If the people were defeated in battle, their God was held to be impotent to help his people. With victory on every side as under David, the God of the land was regarded as stronger than all gods round about, though that did not mean that he was the only God. Milcom of Ammon and Chemosh of Moab stood in much the same relation to their respective territories as Jehovah did to Israel. Again, the centralizing of the Jehovah cult in Jerusalem, instead of having it observed at the various high-places throughout the land, tended to localize Jehovah as the God of Canaan and to supplant the Baal. This was all the easier as "Baal" was not a proper name, but signified merely the husband, lord or owner of a particular portion of the land.

22. 2 K. 5: 17 furnishes a familiar example of this ideal community of deity, land and people. Naaman asks of Elisha two mules' burden of (Israelitish) earth, as he is resolved henceforth to offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice to any other god but Jehovah alone. Thus earth is brought from Jehovah's land to the foreign country in order that he may be able to offer sacrifice to Jehovah on his proper soil. Kautzsch points out that the worship of a god upon foreign soil is not absolutely excluded. Thus Solomon (1 K. 11: 7) erected upon the Mount of Olives a place of sacrifice for Chemosh of Moab. This is to indicate Solomon's idolatry, but it may mean no more than that the "high-place" was to accommodate his Moabite wife in her worship, while Solomon himself may not have joined in this worship.

#### IV.

23. The time of the undivided monarchy, which marks a change from the patriarchal to the monarchical form of government, is the next general period of distinct moral transition in Israel. Samuel was the link between the old and the new order of wider outlook and higher ideals. By his time Israel

was indeed becoming Canaanized fundamentally through agriculture, rather than Canaan becoming Israelized. The nations round about had kings; the Philistine cities enjoyed a somewhat stable government; and the Phoenicians were famed commercially. The traffic on the great caravan highways necessarily impressed the Hebrews with the material value of national enterprise and combination. Intertribal disunion and rivalry were manifestly suicidal to the best interests of the Hebrew community. Samuel's theory of a theocracy being impracticable, the Hebrew demand for a king, the natural outcome of Israel's environment, issued in the choice of Saul (cf. 1 S. 8: 19).

24. It is only in the time of the kings that official interference is made with the conduct of any influential man. The new order of men who attempt a reformation in public morals was the prophets. The character of this epoch-making intervention by the prophets is first unfolded in Samuel as mentor and censor to King Saul. "And here we are surprised to find that he does not appear to have intervened in questions of morality at all. His only record of protest against Saul's conduct is made on the ground of disobedience to an arbitrary command (1 S. 15). When Saul spared Agag and the best of the spoil, it cannot be maintained that he did what was wrong in itself. Unfortunately we can on the other hand hardly visit with stern condemnation the terrible war waged by Israel."<sup>1</sup> It was Samuel, as against Saul, who took the principal part and "hewed Agag in pieces before Jehovah", that is, in sacrifice to him. Samuel's significance, generally, in the history of Old Testament morals is that "he is the first in the long list of the leaders of Israel whose conduct in fundamental matters of morality is brought directly into view (1 S. 12: 3). . . . He virtually founded the prophetic guilds, the chief conservative influence in the life of northern Israel. His services to morality were great, but mainly indirect and potential."<sup>2</sup>

25. Now the pendulum of political life swung away from conservatism. Society was becoming complicated, especially as it began to be constituted under David; for the early simple agricultural life was largely modified by trade and commerce, international war and the official classes. These new conditions challenged Jahwism. With the rise of the monarchy the early ideals of Israel suffered change. The danger of a secular spirit was not so pronounced before the

<sup>1</sup>McCurdy, *History, Prophecy and the Monuments*, Vol. III, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 102.



monarchy as afterwards; for with the growth of trade and industry, and occupations requiring technical skill, the human element began to obtain a greater prominence. In his exceptional treatment of the Amalekites, Saul claims to dispose of his booty in his own way in the consciousness of victory. In the sparing of Agag we may rightly detect a worldly spirit. In taking the census (2 S. 24) David was proud of his people's success, due largely, however, to his own genius. There was a tendency to regard this success for its own sake. Agriculture and prosperity in pastoral life depend on divine favour more manifestly than do military or political achievements.

26. The new conditions were of ill omen to the Nazirites and Rechabites. Indeed the priesthood renounced property or land, though priests received a part of the sacrifice (1 S. 2: 13); had money (2 K. 12: 16); and possibly received a fee like the prophets (Mic. 3: 11). Jehovah was their inheritance. The Levites merely stood for the Jehovah worship. The guilds of the prophets did not protest against the secular life, but kept alive the natural religious consciousness when the Philistines were overrunning the country. In Nathan and Gad we find prophecy profounder than before; they still champion the supremacy of Jehovah, not against Philistines but against the worldly spirit which began to creep in under the monarchy. Likewise, Nazirites and Rechabites protested not against the good things of life in themselves but as they tended to subvert Jahwism. A conscious asceticism is not therefore to be attributed to the Hebrews.

27. Foreign influence now began to play a larger rôle. The Hebrews came to feel themselves a part of a larger world than their own. Pastoral pursuits broadened into various forms of industrial life. The study of certain portions of the Chronicles, especially the large statistical sections, brings to light some data that are not to be ignored, as *e.g.*, the fact that the worship of Baal and Astarte played a more prominent part in the life of the people in the days of Saul and David than the books of Samuel would lead us to surmise. Beginning with David himself we find foreign relations established through various contracts. Foreign wives and concubines were common. Absalom was the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmi the king of Geshur. It was to his maternal grandfather he fled after slaying Amnon. Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, had for her first husband a Hittite, a foreigner in David's service. The mother of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, was an Ammonitess. Again, foreign peoples had bazaars of their own in Palestinian cities. Moreover, the frequent invasions by

Syrians of the northern kingdom, as compared with the southern, brought, along with all the disadvantages of devastated land and imposed tribute, certain advantages. To some extent they broke down the exclusive spirit of the Hebrews. The sphere of Jehovah's authority was widened whenever Israel's bounds were extended and the people of Israel were led to consider somewhat the religious and moral outlook of their foreign rivals. The student of their life from the days of David onward is compelled to acknowledge that the Hebrews continued to borrow and that all the neighboring peoples became their creditors.

28. The worship of Baal and Astarte clung with peculiar pertinacity to the north. The debasing cult of Astarte with the attendant prostitutes (קדשות) helped on Samaria's

fate more quickly than was the case with Jerusalem. Canaanitic influence never counted for so much in the south as in the north. The barren hills of Judah were not suitable places for Canaanitic high-places, the vast majority of which have been found in northern Israel.

29. Again, the men of northern Israel did not reveal any great affection for royalty, even though they submitted to the rule of Jeroboam and his successors. Their traditional love of liberty was too deep-seated to allow any royal house to hold them long in subjection. The Hebrew monarchy was never theoretically absolute. Many large proprietors, *e.g.*, Shobi, Barzillai, Machir, were men of wealth, and from the nature of the soil were to be found chiefly in the north. Such free proprietors would guard most sacredly the old customs, and, clinging tenaciously to their rights as clansmen, would reluctantly yield to the royal prerogative. On the other hand the people of Judah generally had fewer personal possessions than those of northern Israel and were more easily brought under the sway of a strong personality like David.

30. With material prosperity trade and commerce tend to move towards large towns and cities with the result of depopulation for the country and more intricate moral problems for the city. While there was less culture in the country there was in Israel a purer and sturdier morality. "Only on the supposition that the larger towns and the cities, which by reason of their sanctuaries and other influences were to a large extent pervaded by vice and disease, were renewed from time to time, as our cities still are by the inflowing of the more healthy tides of life from the country, can we account for the fact that the collapse of the Hebrew states did not come sooner. City life was, on the whole, not as healthful as village life nor as invig-



orating morally."<sup>1</sup> To Judah as in general less exposed to outside influences, and as bordering on desert regions, we can apply the term "country" more definitely than to northern Israel. In the former there must have been more of civil quietude and domestic contentment, the chief outward conditions of religious and moral steadfastness and progress.

31. So much for the general social and moral conditions under the monarchy. But a Hebrew monarch like David raised special moral difficulties as an individual. It has been said that the time of King David was one in which religion became more spiritual. Such an opinion has been created by writers subsequent to David who cast a halo about his head. It is true that his character has some noble and attractive features; but his high-handed fashion in interfering with the rights of others and his privilege or license in moral relations may in themselves lead us to conclude that David and his age were semi-barbarous; that the religion of Jehovah was no controlling power in his life; and that he was morally not superior to the rank and file of his countrymen.

32. Ferocity in war and lust in private life form an unlovely picture; yet we can hardly acquit David of either. His slaughter of the Moabites was horrible. His harem, while perhaps not a novelty (as some of the old "judges" are said to have had many wives), was undoubtedly in his reign and later the feature of the monarchy which produced the largest amount of confusion, instability and bloodshed. No check could be placed on the king's desires or lusts, and that simply on the ground of his official position.

33. During the writer's residence in Palestine last year he heard several well authenticated statements in Jerusalem illustrative of the above. Among the Arabs to-day the moral license of the sheikh is unlimited. The persons of women are absolutely at the disposal of any prominent sheikh. He may live carnally with any number of women he chooses without violating the public sentiment of the Arabs. That actions are right or wrong intrinsically imposes no restriction on a sheikh's freedom. The code of morals for the sheikh is not at all applicable to the other members of the tribe or family. David as sovereign was practically a typical ancient sheikh who had one law for himself and another for his subjects.

34. At this juncture we meet in Nathan a prophet who could protest against royal license. "His rebuke of David for his atrocious crime goes to the foundation of the moral principle of conduct. As his parable shows, it looks at David's sin

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<sup>1</sup>Day, *Social Life of the Hebrews*, pp. 139 ff.

in the light of his relation to his environment; it shows the disturbance (or wrong) thereby occasioned in the system of which he was the moral centre. To stigmatize a sin as a sin on account of its selfishness was something new in the recorded history of the world. . . . The crime (that is, David's sin with Bathsheba) was rank and grievous, and as it struck at the sanctity and peace of the home of the common man in Israel it was made monumental."<sup>1</sup>

35. Though this marks a distinct advance in prophetism it is however not thorough-going, for Nathan himself helped in the intrigue by which Solomon's rivals were put out of the way (1 K. 1). Self-consistency at least we should expect from a moral censor. The fact is that individuals as such then counted for little: the nation or monarchy was of supreme importance. Every obstacle towards its permanency had to be removed at all costs. The prophet Gad, also, figured in connection with David's census (2 S. 24). War and taxation here suggest themselves as probable motives; but perhaps there was something deeper, the undermining of the old clan system. The reckoning of the people by thousands instead of by "kins" may date from this epoch. The tendency of the moral worth of the individual to lose itself in the multitude is quite apparent.

36. Christian sentiment condemns slavery as an evil to society, not so much because of the burdens and hardships imposed, but because it precludes the development of all that a man may become, and fails to regard a man as an end in himself. It was otherwise in Israel as in some of the better ancient communities. Ordinarily the Hebrew slave was treated kindly, and by the law of Deuteronomy could secure his freedom after six years' service. Abigail reconciled herself with the hated David on the advice of one of the slaves of her husband. It was possible for a slave to take the daughter of the house to wife. On the other hand, that the master is master also of the body of his slave was not abhorrent to the ancient. The Hebrew female slave (*'āmā*) was also a concubine. With the monarchy, however, forced labor, demanded especially of foreigners it is true, created a new situation, bringing in a discontented spirit unlike what prevailed hitherto. Along with concubinage went polygamy, which was practised by David and Solomon in no small way.

37. The edict or will of the king made a wrong a right and probably was due to the belief in the divinity of kings. Thus "the petty rulers in the Amarna letters thoroughly recognize

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<sup>1</sup>McCurdy, *History, Prophecy and the Monuments*, Vol. III, p. 102.



the divine nature of the king who was a god and had the god for his father. Later when Palestine had its own king the Lord's anointed was almost as the deity himself (Ex. 22: 28; cp. 2 S. 14: 17); king and cult were one (Hos. 3: 4) and the king's death could be regarded as the extinction of the nation's lamp (2 S. 21: 17). Not to mention other details, the Messianic ideals of the divinely begotten son and of the ruler whose origin was of aforetime preserve the inveterate belief in the divine ancestry of rulers, an honor which in other lands continued to be conferred upon rather than claimed by them."<sup>1</sup>

38. David practised Oriental falsehood as well as sensuality. In his flight to Nob, he alleged to Ahimelech the head of the priests of Eli's family, that he was bound on urgent business for the king, and accordingly obtained through him as on previous occasions (1 S. 22: 15) an answer from the oracle. David had lived sixteen months at Ziklag when the Philistines prepared for a decisive battle against Israel. Here he professed his allegiance to Achish against Israel. Fortunately the other Philistine leaders were less ready than Achish to trust him. Soon after the Amalekite, who bore tidings of Saul's death to David, was promptly rewarded with death (2 S. 1: 1-10), and thereupon David expressed in a beautiful ode his grief for Saul and Jonathan; but no religious thoughts are contained in the poem whose Davidic authorship is practically undisputed.

39. Cruelty, as noted before, often marked David's wars. Even if the Ammonites were not tortured, yet in his desert raids no life was spared (1 S. 27: 9 ff.), and the victories over Moab and Edom were followed by massacres of men and cruelties to animals (2 S. 8: 2-4). He could induce Hushai to counteract Ahithophel's advice by mean and treacherous ways; after his sin with Bathsheba he stooped to base and cowardly means to conceal his guilt and remove Uriah from his path.

40. The tendency to grant the king a private code of morals was strengthened by the widening of the gap politically and socially between king and people. "Men of worthlessness" were an undesirable element in society after David's wars. They would follow up the booty as a business and naturally had a sense of obligation, not to the community, but to the king only. Moreover, the foreign element in David's body-guard, having no ties to bind them closely to the life of the Hebrews since they merely served the king, must have influenced the body-politic to exalt the king far above the people. The old democratic simplicity and equality of clanship must soon have been wiped out.

<sup>1</sup>S. A. Cook, *Religion of Ancient Palestine*, pp. 63 f.

41. But while David was sadly defective in his moral character, he was gifted with marvellous political insight. His greatest stroke of genius, politically, and ultimately religiously, was his selection of Jerusalem as the centre of national life; and this act of his served in its final results to counteract much of the evil wrought under his regime.—The deep valleys on all sides of Jerusalem save the north were excellent barriers against an enemy, and the city was an excellent strategic centre. In the writer's opinion, the greatest advantage in the site of Jerusalem lay in the fact that it was in a section of country comparatively barren, where the products of the soil, which naturally went hand in hand with and encouraged the Baal cult, would have little influence in shifting the religious centre of the people from Jehovah to Baal. Conditions obtained in Jerusalem which were more like those of Israel's natural home, where the religion of the Kenites taken over by the Hebrews was really native to the soil.

42. The great highways of the ancient world passed by but not through Jerusalem, leaving it in contact with and yet secluded from the surrounding nations. Our study so far makes it plain that the religion of Jehovah had first to be the religion of national and social seclusion. Foreign elements in Canaan were normally too strong for that religion to come into contact with them and emerge the stronger. After the fall of northern Israel the culture and religious heritage of Samaria were transferred to Jerusalem—a sort of Renaissance for Jerusalem. The Canaanitic culture being far stronger in the north than in the south, it is inconceivable that, if Jerusalem were at all like Samaria, the fall of Samaria would not have been followed very shortly by that of Jerusalem. The internal conditions of Samaria, its moral grossness and religious deterioration, were the main causes of its ruin. The same conditions practically obtained in Jerusalem at the time of Isaiah, yet Jerusalem survived Samaria by about a century and a half.

43. The fact that Judah was more protected from ordinary outside attacks than northern Israel does not sufficiently account for this phenomenon in its history. The distance between Samaria and Jerusalem was small and access to the latter was comparatively easy for the world-power of Assyria. Again, the fact that Judah had but a single dynasty, and besides contained the temple, cannot be an explanation of the delay in the fate of Jerusalem. Nor can we discover the reason in the presence of the great prophets like Isaiah and Micah in Jerusalem with their messages of righteousness, justice and mercy; for Samaria had men of similar moral and religious



insight in Amos and Hosea. The most plausible explanation seems to be in the fact of the unique physical conditions of Jerusalem. It has indeed been held that unless Jerusalem had fallen the religion of Jehovah would have remained embryonic. It would rather seem that if Samaria had not fallen, the mingled Jehovah and Baal worships of Samaria and northern Israel would have been too powerful for the religion of Jehovah in Jerusalem to emerge victorious. History has shown clearly how easily the Jehovah worshippers there incorporated foreign elements in their religion in times of crisis; *e.g.* the worship of the heavenly host and other Assyrian or Babylonian forms of idolatry under Manasseh.

44. It is one of the most amazing facts of history, that in the interval between Samaria's fall and that of Jerusalem, the religion of Jehovah, so immature at first, became practically a universal religion. Upon the writer's theory the supreme cause contributory to that end was the providential selection of Jerusalem to be the place where this great issue in religion was to be worked out. The influence of the prophets, the struggle with Baalism, and the contact with foreign nations, helped mightily to bring about that belief in God which is the highest possible—not an ethical monotheism merely, but a spiritual monotheism, according to which there is one God only, who sustains ethical personal relations with all men, governing the universe in a moral order, delighting in justice, mercy and truth, and uniting all men in brotherhood. This in no way detracts from the primacy of Jesus as holding the supreme place in religion. In his fulfilling the Law and the Prophets he founded his teaching on that which was best in the Old Testament religion—best because it had the promise and potency of universal application. To give such prominence to physical conditions in determining the character of Jahwism is especially justifiable from the Semitic standpoint. The Semitic mind sees spirit everywhere in physical nature by the genius of its own thought. The numen of the tree, the fountain, or the earth itself, was for it the important fact. Thus the Hebrews were taught more by external nature than we to-day could be. The rôle of physical geography in Israel's history is indeed a link in the chain of providences that brought Israel to its unique position in the sphere of religion and morals.

## V.

45. The radical differences between northern Israel and Judah were brought to light most clearly in the epoch-making national schism of 934 B.C. The consequent change in politi-

cal government meant for the Hebrews a gradual revolution in religious and ethical thought and life. The writer accordingly regards the schism as the next important event bearing directly upon moral transitions in Israel.

46. The undivided kingdom by nature did not really form a unit; and of all causes in making the cleavage final Solomon's policy was the chief. Outside of Manasseh there probably never was on Israelitish soil a monarch who did so much to subvert the nation morally and religiously as Solomon. It was personal pride as much as piety that led him to the building of the temple. He was a typical Oriental despot in his extensive harem, unbridled lust, gorgeous display and attendant evils. The temple counted immensely in the history of Jahwism, but not for much in Solomon's day. The erection of it entailed foreign alliances and associations which in themselves though for a time commercially good were religiously bad. Hiram of Tyre and the Phoenicians in general figure prominently in connection with the temple. International marriages facilitated trade relations but paralyzed Israel's best interests. For Pharaoh's daughter, a wife of Solomon, a special house had to be built in Jerusalem and an independent altar for her religious ceremonies. Similar provision was made for the religious predilections of Solomon's Moabite and Ammonite wives.

47. Along with the evil of the harem went something akin to it, viz., "Qodesh" prostitution in the temple during Solomon's reign, though nothing is said of this in the records. Certainly it prevailed a few years later. The Jerusalem temple, not having in its origin an exclusive significance, was simply one more of the countless high-places, though the most imposing of them.

48. The moral significance of international trade relations was very great then as well as later (cf. 1 K. 20: 34) when Ahab had trading quarters in Damascus from Benhadad, even as the latter's father had the same privilege in Samaria, and when northern Israel became a member of international trade interests concentrated in Syria. The commercial spirit and opportunities for the enrichment of the few partly through the impoverishing of the many were all too evident. This evil was greater a century and a half later, when the prophets saw in these trading propensities a falling away from the true religion (Is. 23: 16 f.; Nah. 3: 4; Amos 8: 5).

49. Solomon's partition of the kingdom, for purposes of collecting taxes and drafting men for the army, was not made in accordance with the natural divisions of the land and helped to precipitate the schism. The old associations of clan



and tribe (Gen. 49) continued to lose their importance. The largest and strongest of the tribes became so important that the smaller tribes lost their identity. Soon "Ephraim" and northern Israel became synonymous, while "Judah" stood for the southern kingdom. Centralization of political organization and religious forces in the city-states of Samaria and Jerusalem was the natural result.

50. The schism actually occurred under Rehoboam, to whom was left little more than the capital and his own tribe of Judah, while Jeroboam had nearly all the rest in the north. The transition from an elective monarchy to a rigidly despotic rule had been accomplished too quickly. Only a short time before, not royal birth but the will of the people was what entitled a man to sit on the throne. According to the book of Kings, Rehoboam favored worship on high-places and religious prostitution. "It is however very questionable whether this remark refers to Rehoboam personally and not rather to the kingdom of Judah generally (1 K. 14: 22-24, verses 22 f. at all events seem to refer to the sins of Judah in general while v. 2, on the other hand, looks like an anticipation of 15: 12). That high-places, with 'massebas' and 'asherahs' as well, still maintained their position beside the temple, and perhaps also, to some extent under the influence of the northern kingdom, became still more prevalent, is not improbable. Besides, Rehoboam's mother was a heathen."<sup>1</sup>

51. While giving full weight to political, social, or economic causes in effecting the schism none was more important than the subtle influence of environment which was quite different in the north from that in the south. "Like the vast majority of mankind they (Jesus and the Samaritan woman) were unconsciously dominated by physical environment. No one of them as an individual felt the influence greatly; but by inheritance and training they were saturated with the effect of century upon century of life in peculiar geographic surroundings. . . . Jesus showed how psychic forces triumph over physical."<sup>2</sup> There is a geological reason among others why the great essentials of the religion of the Jews were preserved in Judea but were almost entirely lost in Samaria. The waves of foreign influence destroyed Samaria's individuality; Judea's isolation was her strength. "Madeba and the surrounding regions of Moab may not rank high in their contribution to history, but they are of great importance because they suggest a remarkably close connection between physical changes and moral and intellectual revolutions."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kittel, *History of the Hebrews*, Vol. II, p. 247.

<sup>2</sup>Huntington, *Palestine and its Transformation*, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 207.

52. "Judah is bare, secluded, a land of shepherds and unchanging life. Samaria on the other hand is fertile and open, a land of husbandmen as much in love with as they were liable to foreign influences."<sup>1</sup> That within Israel "her tribes remained so distinct"; that "she so easily split into two kingdoms on the same narrow Highlands", and that "even in Judah there were clans like the Rechabites who preserved their life in tents and their austere desert habits, side by side with the Jewish vineyards and Jewish cities"<sup>2</sup>—all these phenomena corroborate the theory that the physical conditions of Judah and Jerusalem, in keeping with the original environment when, through Moses, Jahwism first became Israel's religion, were essential to the survival of that religion.

## VI.

53. The next distinct ethical advance was made in the person of Elijah and in the reign of Ahab (875-853 B.C.)—a fresh illustration of how distinctly new political issues give rise to new moral problems and moral leaders. Phoenician influence had been felt in Israel before, but it had at this time a unique moral significance. Not only did Ahab marry Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre, but he also gave statutory authorization to the formal establishment of the Phoenician cult in Israel. "In Phoenicia where wealth and luxury had been enjoyed on a scale unknown to either Israel or the Canaanites of the interior, there was a refinement, if one may so speak, and at the same time a prodigality of vicious indulgences connected with the worship of Baal and Astarte to which Israel had hitherto been a stranger, and whose promotion under the new auspices has made the name of Jezebel a Biblical synonym for all that is to the last degree impure, cruel, and shameless."<sup>3</sup>

54. The most destructive influence on the moral well-being of Israel throughout its history would seem to have been exerted in connection with the syncretism of Jahwism with Baalism. The social oppression of the poor by the rich, or excessive ritual devoid of righteousness as in Amos' day, was not comparable to the licentious immoral sexual practices of the Baal cult. Polygamy and concubinage in general, and sexual immorality encouraged at the high-places, were the chief menace to the body-politic of Israel. Kings would not offend to the same extent as "Jeroboam who made Israel to

<sup>1</sup>G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup>McCurdy, *H. P. M.*, Vol. I, p. 258.



sin," yet they did not remove the high-places and the asheras and massebas. Not till Josiah's reform of 621 B.C. were the high-places regarded as illegal. The specific sin of adultery implied above was not regarded in our sense of the word. "The husband who during his marriage has intercourse with an unmarried woman does not commit adultery. Adultery means only the violation of another man's wife and this, according to strict law, includes his betrothed (Lev. 20: 10 ff.). The commandment against adultery is certainly not meant to forbid all sexual license. This is never forbidden directly in the Old Testament."<sup>1</sup>

55. Self-indulgence with the "Qodesh" women at the shrines was, of course, practised under the cloak of religion. "Sodomites" also were set apart for that purpose. Likewise the "holy" man of the modern Semites may be anything but a moral man. The "mejnun" is possessed by a jinn. "In a certain family in Nebk the wife, a perfectly respectable woman, apparently with the consent of her husband, considers it wrong to refuse a "holy" man. This is, moreover, not exceptional."<sup>2</sup>

56. Without minimizing the moral declension of Israel under Ahab, we may count it in his favor that he named his children Ahaziah, Joram and Athaliah, after Jehovah, not after Baal; moreover, he had prophets of Jehovah in considerable numbers about him (1 K. 22: 6 ff. and 22 ff.). In all probability Ahab did not renounce Jehovah, though he patronized the worship of Baal alongside of Jahwism. The prophets of Jehovah, Elijah in particular, are more significant than the king at this juncture.

57. The seers of Samuel's day were to the prophets like Elijah as twilight is to noon-day. The character of the prophets had changed. Formerly they had gone through the land in troops under ecstatic influence almost like madmen preaching a holy war. Their leaders were then rather political mentors; now the fostering of religious thought is specially attended to. They call themselves sons of the prophets,—*i.e.* disciples and companions of a prophet of rank. "Between them and men of the stamp of Amos and Isaiah there is only a step." One may not theorize much on Elijah for the details of his actions are largely embellished by his biographer, yet Kittel writes: "The most powerful perhaps of all Old Testament prophets because the most original now crosses Ahab's path—Elijah of Tishbe in Gilead . . . With a clear con-

<sup>1</sup>Schultz, Old Testament Theology, Vol. II, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Curtiss, Primitive Semitic Religion To-day, p. 156.

sciousness of the real point at issue he takes the field for Jehovah against Baal, does battle for the moral rights and freedom of the human spirit as against the tendency to abandon them in the religion of nature which was demoralizing and debasing to man; and in this he is the genuine counterpart of Moses with whom the New Testament ranges him. Elijah introduced into prophecy that species of categorical imperative which distinguishes him as well as the later prophets, that brazen inflexibility, that diamond-like hardness of character which bids them hold fast by their moral demand, even should the nation be dashed to pieces against it. For him the demand means to stand by Jehovah as against Baal."<sup>1</sup>

58. Kittel's estimate of Elijah as "the most original of all the prophets" is perhaps rather extreme. With Elijah, the man of the desert, there was a natural revolt against anything that savored of culture whether the source were Tyre or elsewhere. The Rechabites of this period, by their simple life in abstaining from wine and living in tents, are counterparts of Elijah in this regard. They protest against the existing order which was more or less inevitable. Elijah saw the evil attendant upon Baal worship; but the sources do not warrant us in giving him a very spiritual conception of Jehovah to offset the belief in Baal. He could not, in the conflict with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, teach that Jehovah was to be loved apart from his gifts in nature. It needed the exile to force that thought upon Israel. Elijah's was not strict monotheism, nor even ethical monotheism. His contribution to religious thought was not that he forced the issue as to whether Baal or Jehovah were sovereign, but his insisting that the Baal cult which was morally degrading must be ousted from Israel's life. Jahwism meant to Elijah a change from the existing moral order to a return to the primitive form of life of the Jehovah worshippers. Similarly the great prophets later on declared that it was on the ethical side that Jahwism must make its advance and lay hold upon the heart and conscience of Israel. In this sense the statement may be approved that there is no gap fundamentally between the message of Elijah and that of Amos, though the teaching of the latter in the realm of morality far surpasses in depth, detail and comprehensiveness anything that comes to us from Elijah. Had Elijah given important teaching worthy of record, it surely would have been committed to writing by himself or a disciple.

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<sup>1</sup>Kittel, *History of the Hebrews*, Vol. II, p. 266.



59. A very important agency for the development of the moral sense must have been the seven thousand (probably many more—1 K. 19: 18) who did not bow the knee to Baal. Happily the type of man who could withstand Ahab for his act of irreligion and immorality in seizing Naboth's estate as he did was being multiplied considerably in the persons of prophets who necessarily leavened society both intellectually and morally.

60. The person of Elisha is enveloped in mist and mystery and makes no contribution to ethical thought. He was a prophet who instigated too abrupt changes in the political order. His method of eradicating evil was only superficial, to say nothing of its inhumanity. Like Elijah, he attacked personalities, but he did not get at the source of the disturbance. With Jehu (2 K. 9 and 10) we find Elisha at one—a very happy supporter indeed of his two awful massacres of the Judean princes and Baal worshippers. Jonadab's way was very much more profound than Jehu's. The Rechabites were, however, not thoroughly right in advocating "back to the tents", for cities were there to stay. A deeper cry from the wilderness against the evils of the day was to be heard from Amos, the herdsman of Tekoa. Culture through settled occupation in Canaan, with the resultant secular spirit, was a constant danger to Israel, but not an evil in itself; yet Elisha felt divinely commissioned to support Jehu in his near-sighted and bloody policy. We may again see Elisha's shallowness of moral insight in the fact that "the state worship of the golden calves led to no quarrel between Elisha and the dynasty of Jehu; and this one fact is sufficient to show that even in a time of notable revival the living power of the religion was not felt to lie in the principle that Jehovah cannot be represented by images."<sup>1</sup> If Elisha's faith was monotheistic, it was certainly very immature.

61. The common people of Jehu's day, as before, felt that Jehovah had forsaken his land if Israel suffered in battle (cf. Jehu's tribute to Assyria 842 B.C.) in spite of the fact that sacrifices might be redoubled and the feasts thronged with eager worshippers. "Under such trials a heathen religion which was capable of no higher hopes than were actually entertained by the mass of the Hebrews would have declined and perished with the fall of the nation. But Jehovah proved himself a true God by vindicating his sovereignty in the very events that proved fatal to the gods of the Gentiles."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 69.

Neither Jehu nor Elisha saw that in the victories of Ashur Jehovah was still supreme and could use Assyria as an instrument to further his purpose. Nor did they realize that Jehovah's cause was not victorious in the mere extirpation of Baal-worship. The true character of Jehovah was not learned in this crisis in Israel's religion: but the faith of Jehovah was never again directly assailed by influences from without.

## VII.

62. The last period of moral transition, coming under the scope of this essay is, roughly, the eighth century B.C., and in particular that portion of it in which the first literary prophets performed their epoch-making service, viz., between 760 and 700 B.C. We pass over the "E" source of the Hexateuch, which probably dates itself slightly before 760 B.C.; it shows no influence from Amos or Hosea. The "J" school we may place towards the close of the eighth century. The latter is the most important of the three narrators of the Hexateuch. "His is the deepest knowledge of the nature, origin and progress of sin among mankind, of God's counter-acting work, of his plan of salvation (Gen. 3: 15 f.; 5: 29; 8: 21 f.; 9: 26 f.; 12: 2 f.; 18: 19)."<sup>1</sup> "J" and "E" we omit as they were conservators of religious and ethical truth, while the prophets were originators. By 783 B.C. when Jeroboam II came to the throne of northern Israel, Azariah being his contemporary in Judah, both kingdoms entered upon a period of unexampled prosperity. The last half of that century was Israel's opportunity to make her most original and permanent contribution to ethical thought. It was then that justice tempered with mercy, essential to advance in civilization, received such attention from the great prophets, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah, that the world after them never could be the same morally as before. The idea that religion can exist apart from the moral life of man receives a fatal shock from these preachers of righteousness. Many of their principles were such that the New Testament does not surpass them. Prophecy as it was under Amos and his followers is unique in Israel's history. No other nation, though it had prophets of its own, has left such a priceless heritage as these geniuses of Israel bequeathed to humanity.

63. Amos, a herdsman of Tekoa, was the first of the writing prophets; and about his personality hangs a great mystery. His oratorical power and literary finish alike presuppose years of training in the art of public speaking and writing. That

<sup>1</sup>Dillman, *Die Genesis erklärt* (4th edition), p. xiii.



prophecy is now definitely committed to writing is most significant, and it is no mere coincidence that this happens when the Assyrians appear upon the national horizon of Judah and Israel. Moreover, the sermons of Amos and his contemporary prophets were preserved in writing mainly because they had something worth preserving. It is not the social and international problems as such that are of primary concern to Amos. He cares for them only in so far as these have to do with the undivided and sincere worship of Jehovah as that worship must express itself in right or honest dealings man with man.

64. A prophet such as Amos was something more than a first among his equals, and a statement like the following is quite inadequate: "That Amos was the spiritual leader of his day there can be no doubt; but if he had been literally out of sight of the main army he would have been no use to them, and there is no reason to suppose that his name, much less his writings, would have been preserved."<sup>1</sup> This is not necessarily true. It might rather well be that the prophetic utterances were now put into permanent form through writing because of opposition on the part of the "main army" or the ordinary population. Amos or Isaiah shows how far the popular religion of Jehovah had been debased and what hold it had on the lives of the common people, as well as on the professors of religion and accredited guides of the people. The common people in Islam to-day are not concerned about orthodox views, and Mohammed is to them not such a potent factor as are the jinn or the spirits of great saints. Worship and sacrifice are still offered by them to the spirits of these sacred ancestors. The "main army" in Amos' day were similarly unorthodox.

65. Kuenen speaks of Amos as creating "ethical monotheism" in Israel. The phrase is felicitous; but to speak of ethical monotheism as being created at that epoch is to divorce the present from the past. What Amos did was to bring to light and give definite expression to this belief entertained by those about and before him. Elijah, like Amos, saw "the moral necessity of the recognition and pure worship of Jehovah, and of the practical fulfilment of the law of righteousness which was the essence of his character."<sup>2</sup> Elijah's belief seems practically monotheistic as we think of his scorn for the Baal who might be sleeping or needed to be awakened. Amos believed in Chemosh as the god of Moab but not as

<sup>1</sup>J. C. Todd, *Politics and Religion in Ancient Israel*, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup>McCurdy, *H. P. M.*, Vol. I, p. 338.

being nearly so powerful as Jehovah. Chemosh was practically non-existent to Amos' mind. Moab once more became tributary to Israel (2 K. 14: 25)—a new proof of Jehovah's might.

66. It was of greater moment to have justice socially than to know whether there is a god besides Jehovah. "The long unhappy wars with Damascus with the famines and plagues that were their natural accompaniments (Amos 4) exhausted the strength and broke the independence of the poorer freemen. The court became the centre of a luxuriant and corrupt aristocracy, which seems gradually to have absorbed the land and wealth of the nation, while the rest of the people were hopelessly impoverished. The old good understanding between classes disappeared, and the gulf between rich and poor became continually wider. The poor could find no law against the rich who sucked their blood by usury and every form of fraud (Am. 2: 6, 7; 4: 1; 8: 4); civil corruption and oppression became daily more rampant (Am. 3: 9 f.). The best help against such disorders ought to have been found in the religion of Jehovah, but the official organs of that religion shared in the general corruption."<sup>1</sup> Such a state of society was due largely to leaders, who, among the Hebrews as among the Arabs of to-day, had an extraordinary influence upon the multitude. Priests and prophets professional by trade taught and gave judgment for hire. Leaders in the commercial sphere were particularly blameworthy.

67. Morality was of universal, not provincial, concern to Amos. The sins for which Damascus, Ammon, Moab and the rest are judged cannot be offences against Jehovah as the national God of Israel. Amos teaches that heathen nations are to be held responsible, not because they do not worship Israel's God, but because they have broken the laws of universal morality. Assiduous Jehovah worship in itself will not avail in Israel. "I hate, I despise your feast days. . . . But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness as an unfailing stream (Am. 5: 21 ff.)." Israel's sins are thus sins not against members of Israel as such but against humanity. The inherent mental narrowness of the Hebrews is now challenged as never before.

68. The political situation was an external impulse to Amos' broad conception of history. It is Jehovah who brought Israel out of Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Aramaeans from Kir (9: 7). Every movement of history is Jehovah's work. To Amos the question was not what Jehovah as the

<sup>1</sup>W. R. Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, p. 95.



King of Israel will do for his people against the Assyrians, but what the Sovereign of the world designs to effect by the terrible instrument which he has created.

69. Laws of retribution for individuals and nations are an element in the moral order of the universe which Amos posits—an epoch-making conception indicating this prophet's place in history. "The advance of Assyria and the sin of Israel hang together in Jehovah's purpose. . . . To produce conviction of sin by an appeal to the universal conscience, to the known nature of Jehovah, above all to the already visible shadow of coming events that prove the justice of the prophetic argument, is the great purpose of the prophet's preaching. . . . What Amos means by the total destruction of the sinners of Jehovah's people (9: 1-10) is of course to be understood from his point of view of Israel's sin as consisting essentially in social offences inconsistent with national righteousness."<sup>1</sup> The "sinners" of Israel are the corrupt rulers and their associates, the unjust and sensual oppressors, the men who have no regard for civil righteousness. We may expect judgment to follow. "You only of all the families of the earth have I known, therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities" (Am. 3: 2).

70. Hosea, a native of the northern kingdom, preached to his countrymen a message in many respects the most original of the Hebrew prophets. To Amos the great offence is judicial corruption, to Hosea "sensuality". "To Hosea as to Amos justice and the obligations of civil righteousness are still the chief sphere within which the right knowledge of Jehovah and due regard to his covenant are tested. Where religion has a national form, and especially in such a state of society as both prophets deal with, that is necessary; but Hosea refers these obligations to a deeper source. Israel is not only the dominion but the family of Jehovah, and the fatherhood of God takes the place of his kingly righteousness as the fundamental idea of Israel's religion. Jehovah is God and not man, but the meaning of this is that his love is sovereign, pure, unselfish, free from all impatience, and all variableness as the love of an earthly father can never be."<sup>2</sup>

71. A worship morally false is in no sense the worship of the true God (Matt. 6: 24). Hosea put the ban on irreligious worship as it allied itself with what was originally Canaanitic worship. The Baal was regarded merely as the source of the fertility of the soil, and the evil results of his belief were in

<sup>1</sup>W. R. Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, pp. 141 f.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 162.

evidence in the northern rather than in the southern kingdom. The fertility of the land suggested sexual analogies of a crass and physical kind in Israel's thought of Jehovah as the possessor of the land; hence, "the prevalence of religious prostitution and widespread disregard of the laws of chastity, precisely identical with the abominations of Ashtoreth among the Phoenicians and accompanied by the same symbolism of the sacred tree which expressed the conception of the deity as a principle of physical fertility" (Hos. 4: 13 ff.).<sup>1</sup> Jehovah worship was certainly with the masses practically within the sphere of nature religion. Hosea, speaking of Jehovah's marriage with Israel, lifted his religion above physical conceptions and showed that Jehovah as husband of his nation sustained moral, and not physical, relations. In Hosea's mind Jehovah's love for Israel was the fundamental impulse to right conduct in common morality and worship.

72. Hosea 2: 8 is a powerful indictment against the popular religion of the day. "Israel did not know that it was I (Jehovah) that gave her the grain and the wine and the oil and multiplied unto her silver and gold which they used for Baal." Compare also Hosea 4: 1, 2. Conditions are implied to be somewhat better in Judah (Hos. 4: 15). The corruption of Judah seems to be less ancient than that of northern Israel (Hos. 11: 12, Heb. 12: 1).

73. Political events now moved rapidly and with momentous issues. Samaria fell in 722 B.C. when nearly thirty thousand of its inhabitants were exiled. By this northern Israel was annexed to Assyria, while Judah enjoyed an independent political existence for many years to come. The history of religion shows clearly that when outwardly the success of a religion is gone, its vital, permanent character will be brought more into relief. Christianity was apparently defeated at the Cross, but, in reality, was splendidly triumphant. Similarly it seemed that the good and bad alike in the life of northern Israel were wiped out of existence in Samaria's downfall. It is impossible, however, not to believe that the best of northern Israel's past was transferred to the people of Judah after 722 B.C. Up to that date culture and civilization had had their home in the north. Samaria was to Judah much as Constantinople was to Rome during the middle ages. Judah had her Renaissance after 722 B.C.

74. Isaiah's prophetic ministry was begun in Judah when that kingdom was enjoying material prosperity comparable to that in the north under Jeroboam II. To a large extent the

<sup>1</sup>W. R. Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, p. 174.



political, moral, economic, and religious problems of the two kingdoms were at that time similar, yet the success with which such problems were solved varied considerably in these kingdoms. Isaiah, chapter 1, gives somewhat later a lamentable picture of Jerusalem's moral and religious situation. Ritual was valueless (v. 11). Verses 16b, 17, 23 or 3: 16 ff. are like an extract from the pen of Amos.

75. With changing political relations new national obligations were entailed. With Isaiah foreign alliances with Egypt or Assyria must be avoided on moral and religious grounds. The prophetic word to Israel in the crisis of 701 B.C. to keep free of foreign powers and have confidence only in Jehovah saved the political, and indeed the religious, situation for a time. Syncretism of the gods of the respective countries meant a lessening of Jehovah's power. It followed then that Jehovah's earthly representative, the king, must lose also in his sovereignty. The unity of Jehovah and the unity of Judah were indissolubly associated.

76. If Jehovah be, as he was to Isaiah, the Holy One of Israel, separated from and elevated above all other deities, the king must also be unique and apart from all other kings politically, morally and religiously. The stability of the Davidic dynasty encouraging kingly rule, and the prestige of the Jerusalem temple strengthening the worship of one God, went hand in hand with and helped towards the ideal of a Messianic king (as in Isa. 9), whose government should be perpetual and peaceful (v. 7). The idea of the Kingdom of God is in part the complement and development of Isa. 9. The Kingdom is a society whose members recognize the claims of the overlordship of the Messiah and their duties of justice and mercy one toward another in the varied relations of life.

77. While Isaiah was of the city, his contemporary, Micah of Moresheth, hailed from the country. Neither he nor Isaiah may be said to make a distinct advance in ethical thought upon Amos and Hosea, but it does seem only fair to mention the classical utterance credited to Micah in chap. 6: 6-8, and which, at any rate, was in keeping with his teaching. Doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God, would seem to be the best summary of Old Testament religion and morality, combining as they do the distinctive ideas of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah. Again in 4: 26 Micah spoke more penetratingly than he doubtless thought. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." This was Judah's rôle in history in spite of the Babylonian exile over a century later. We should note also how in chap. 3: 11 f. he proclaims that political and social ruin is the necessary consequence of national wrongdoing.

## VIII.

Before tabulating conclusions drawn from the foregoing period of investigation, it may be well to glance at three subsequent epochs in Judah's life in order to emphasize what were, in the writer's opinion, some of the more important influences at work for the propagation and preservation of Jahwism. These periods centre around (a) the reign of Manasseh; (b) the reform of Josiah; and (c) Judah's captivity.

78. (a) Manasseh's deflection from the true worship of Jehovah is another illustration of what a mighty counteracting force against Jahwism was the popular religion of the Hebrews.<sup>1</sup> The year 701 B.C. was very critical for Judah's political autonomy and her religious future. The deliverance of Jerusalem suggested to the Hebrews the sanctity of their life in Jehovah's eyes, and that Jehovah would, indeed could, not harm his people. Self-complacency and self-righteousness became then the dominant sentiments. Thus the lower element in religious life came to assert itself. In a decade (690 B.C.) Manasseh overturned any good work his father Hezekiah had accomplished. Budde, indeed, exceptionally regards Manasseh's actions in a very tolerant and optimistic spirit. "We should like to believe that Hezekiah's efforts to remove from the temple grossly sensual religious customs (2 K. 18:4) were the results of this triumph of the prophet (*i.e.* Isaiah in the crisis of 701 B.C.). We should note that the only indisputable fact in this account is that Hezekiah took away the brazen serpent. On the other hand, he cannot have put down the worship at the high-places, for this reform remained for Josiah to effect."<sup>2</sup> Again, "the foreign cult of the time of Manasseh was still, to be sure, an unquestionable deflection, but this even did not remain wholly worthless for the progress of religion. The conviction of Jehovah's supremacy over the whole world and all its gods must have become more deeply and sharply than ever impressed upon the consciousness of the age, for a whole pantheon had been supported to Him."<sup>3</sup> Such an opinion is generous and ingenious but not convincing. It is probably nearer the truth that with Manasseh the popular religion was restored along with the worship

<sup>1</sup>In Islam to-day the same unorthodox tendency is very evident with the common people. The Moslem peasants (*fellahin*) about Jerusalem quite evidently lay little emphasis on the Moslem Friday; and their women are quite improper in the sense of disregarding the veil. Rarely did the writer notice the Moslems of the countryside leave their duties in the field to pray towards Mecca.

<sup>2</sup>Budde, *Religion of Israel to the Exile*, p. 156.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 167.



of the host of heaven; but there was a difference, for the old cruelties and indecencies had been spontaneous and natural, whereas under Manasseh they were refined and almost artificial. The followers of the true religion had meanwhile gained in moral earnestness and made it more difficult for the popular religion to be triumphant.

79. (b) In Josiah's reform we find an illustration of how disintegrating was the worship at the high-places. Jahwism required a central sanctuary. The reform was based on the "Book of Direction" found in 621 B.C., the preparation of which presupposes a very worthy movement on the part of the priestly class. Literature in the highest sense of the term was by this time a very potent factor in the developing of the moral consciousness of the Hebrews. Evidently it was because of popular opposition that the book had been hidden—another proof that the rank and file of Hebrews were kept loyal to pure Jehovah worship only with the greatest effort. According to this book high-places were all to be destroyed and worship centralized in Jerusalem. Amos knew nothing of these regulations, nor Isaiah, but directly or indirectly, logically or otherwise, their teachings led to the above result. The future of Jahwism was still at stake. Jahwism was strong not in combination or assimilation with foreign elements, political or religious, but in separation from these. Providence led the Hebrews into narrow confines, practically within the limits of Jerusalem in the end. The temple in Jerusalem necessarily exercised a great unifying influence. Jehovah alone bade fair to be exalted to the level whereon his religion even in Israel could become supreme. A great reversal to the progress of Jahwism was given, however, by Josiah's death at the hands of Necho: neither the king nor the temple was inviolable.

80. (c) In Judah's captivity we find a final illustration of the principle that the physical conditions of Judah and Jerusalem were the most important of all external conditions for the preservation and triumph of Jahwism. In 607 B.C. Nineveh fell. The Babylonians soon had an opportunity to promote or to destroy Israel's religion. In 598 B.C. Jehoiakim revolted against Nebuchadrezzar, who wreaked vengeance on Judah and brought about the first captivity of Jerusalem in 597 B.C. to be followed by the second captivity of 586 B.C. Amid all the gloom, a remnant and nucleus was left in Jeremiah and Gedaliah. The prophet Jeremiah was rejected by all but a few, Gedaliah being the outstanding exception. In the latter we find "a final but futile attempt to raise once more a Judaic commonwealth on the ruins of the ancient state", largely because there was no stable government. Jerusalem

did not suffer as complete annihilation as Samaria. Had Jerusalem and the surrounding country been richer and more attractive for commercial or military reasons, it is more than probable that Nebuchadrezzar would have given such personal attention to them that no vestige of the religion of Jehovah would have been left on the soil of Judah. The aim of the king of Babylon in the West-land was to control the commerce of Tyre and keep the highways to Egypt open. A spark of religious ardor was even left in the closing hours of Judah's life. The remnant in Judah, as well as the land itself, acted like magnets to draw the exiles back from Babylon. The later religious development of the Jews required "a hedge about the law", and indeed a land hedged in and apart from surrounding nations. Providentially Jerusalem and Judah furnished such conditions. Granting to the great prophets of Israel their most unique place in giving shape and color to the final religion of Israel—final in so far as it is embodied and unfolded in the religion of the Master, emphasis must still be laid upon the influence of Jerusalem's geographical situation and above all upon the physical conditions of Judah as a whole.

## IX.

The results of the above investigation may be tabulated in the following conclusions:—

81. The Semitic conception of the god, the land and the people was shared by the Hebrews, and Jehovah being regarded as the God alone of the Hebrews and the possessor of their land, it was long before Jahwism as a religion attained the character of universality and finality. Moreover, freedom from foreign innovations in worship was essential to the elevation of Jahwism above a mere nature religion.

82. Jahwism was more easily developed in desert or pasture land than in a richer agricultural country. The prophets of Israel who made the first original contributions to religious and ethical thought were men of the desert or its neighborhood, *e.g.* Elijah of Tishbe, who first declared the Baal cult fatal to Jahwism; Amos of Tekoa, who first preached "ethical monotheism"; Micah of Moresheth, who shows the national consequences of social and official injustice.

83. Amos as the herald of "ethical monotheism" declared honesty, justice, etc., as the essential fundamental in religion. The religion of Israel became identified with and inseparable from true morality.

84. Jahwism demands not only a just but a central government. The kingship in northern Israel was never so fortunate as in Judah. The local Baalim presiding over their respective



territories, and the many strong, independent cities in the north, both tended to make one central government next to an impossibility. The continuity of the Davidic dynasty and the presence of a central Jehovah shrine in Judah were of incomparable value in saving Jahwism for Judah when northern Israel fell in 722 B.C.

85. It is a Semitic habit of thought to be preoccupied with a single idea, and consequently to be under the influence of a single principle as it is embodied in a prominent personality. Here mental and moral narrowness go hand in hand, and are well illustrated in the modern Bedouin. The sheikh has absolute authority, wielding an influence as great for good as for evil. As a people the Arabs do not think for themselves, but submit to some outstanding individual's opinion or authority in matters civil, social or religious. The same was true in its measure of ancient Israel. Amos and contemporary prophets were not alone, having associates of kindred spirit, yet the influence of a very small number of great men was amazing. With the Hebrews the few or the one may easily control the many.

86. Jahwism naturally tended towards inner unity rather than towards diversity, and refused to absorb and transform to its own higher purposes the diversified elements of Canaanitic culture and religion. Jahwism was triumphant only when Jehovah was one and undivided. Recognition of many Baalim meant to the Hebrews a diversity of allegiance and worship. Like Jehovah, his earthly representative, the king, must be one and sovereign. A political situation in which many kings held sway was fatal to the progress of Jahwism. The ideal single sovereign in the past was David, and for the future was to be the Messiah of the Davidic line. Back of the idea of one God, one temple, one king, one people, stands the solidarity of Jehovah, his land, and his people for the Hebrew consciousness. To make the one true Jehovah the ruler of all lands, in short, the common Father of mankind, was necessarily a supremely difficult problem for Old Testament religion which brings us merely to the verge of belief in the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of all men.

87. The physical features of Judah and Jerusalem were the most important of all external conditions that made for the preservation of Jahwism in Judah after its collapse in Israel in 722 B.C. Samaria fell not so much because it was more exposed than Jerusalem to the advance of Assyria, but on account of the sensuality and political corruption within its borders, encouraged by the more complete assimilation of Ephraim with Canaanitic culture and worship. The rich vegetation, the green trees and fertile valleys, the predomi-



nance of high-places in northern as compared with southern Palestine, were the conditions under which flourished the immoral Baal cult. Judah was largely exempt from these temptations through her unique physical character. The inferior agricultural possibilities of Judah made a hardy, simple, and more democratic people than in the north, where good opportunities for the acquisition of wealth, the creation of class spirit and the like, obtained. To trust in Jehovah apart from his gifts as seen in the products of the soil was not so easy in the north as in the south, with the result that the refining and spiritualizing of Jahwism was Judah's task rather than Ephraim's. The fruits and products of Judah being comparatively meagre, the people were led to look beyond externals to a truer conception of the character of Jehovah.

### VITA.

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I, Percival Wilson Spence, son of William and Grace Spence, was born in Niagara Falls South, Canada, on the twenty-sixth of June, 1885. Most of my early education was received in the Drummondville Public School and the Niagara Falls Collegiate Institute. In April, 1901, my parents moved to Toronto, and the following July I matriculated from the Jameson Avenue Collegiate Institute. The next two years I devoted to business. In the fall of 1903 I registered in the University of Toronto, taking the General Course for two years, and commencing in the second year my honour studies in the Department of Semitic Languages, in which I graduated with first-class honors in 1907. In October, 1907, I enrolled as a theological student at Knox College, Toronto, where I graduated in April, 1910, with the Travelling Fellowship. During the session 1910-11 I pursued post-graduate studies in Theology and Arts leading to the degree of B.D. from Knox College in April, 1911, and the degree of M.A. from the University in June, 1911. The session 1911-12 was spent in study and travel in Palestine in connection with the American School of Research at Jerusalem, the Director of which for that year was Professor J. F. McCurdy; and the present thesis received its impulse from my sojourn in the Holy Land. In my Semitic studies I feel the keenest sense of gratitude to my esteemed teacher, Professor James Frederick McCurdy, of the University of Toronto, whose kindness and inspiration have been unfailing. My other teachers, Professors J. E. McFadyen, late of Knox College; the late Ross G. Murison, of University College; J. F. McLaughlin, of Victoria College, and Richard Davidson, formerly of University College, and now of Knox College, I shall ever hold in grateful remembrance.





